567 now the circle of Tenkodogo constituted a reservoir (figuratively called lambagré, "cotton reserve") from which the warriors and vassals of the emperor brought back hundreds of young slaves. This was because Garango recognized no authority; it was dependent neither on the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou nor on the king of Tenkodogo. Tradition has it that the warriors of the Mossi chiefs were always surprising the people of Garango on market days. The memory of these raids is why, even today the markets at Garango [366] are open only from six in the morning until noon.

The Mossi considered themselves to be free men, and no one, [644] not even naba, had the [85] right to reduce a Moaga subject to slavery. The facial tattoos made it easy to distinguish the Moaga [304] from foreigners.

Since there were few contacts between neighboring villages, 567 it was difficult even for highwaymen to sell young people from near- 674 by areas. This does not mean that there were not, all the same, captives of Mossi origin. Bandits rode, for instance, from Ouagadougou to Boussouma. They always carried large leather [492] sacks tied to their saddles and into them thrust children and women who were taken by surprise while gathering fruit in the bush. Such captives were always sold far from their home villages. Naturally such practices were severely dealt with by the naba. Naba Wobgo drove the canton chief of Bilgotenga, Warongo, from his territory because he enslaved Mossi people. Warongo was forced to take refuge in Yatenga and returned home only after the coming of the French.

567 Some of the slaves brought back from Garango were kept by the emperor, and the rest were distributed among the warriors. Up to that time no one thought of using them for anything but field work and domestic labor.

It was Naba Baongo, the twenty-sixth successor of Oubri, who first thought of selling the slaves. He said: "Id kossi bazas kamba tib boude nan wa saĩ" (literally, "let us sell these slave dogs; perhaps, one day, [86] there will be no more of them"). It is as if the emperor had foreseen the suppression of slavery and the emancipation of the slaves.

Today one seldom encounters former Boussanga slaves. They have no doubt returned to their villages since the arrival of the [304] French. Their descendants (house slaves, dogyiri) now wear the same facial tattoos as the Mossi.

for roasting and is replaced with green millet, eaten raw after being beaten with a small stick to remove the chaff. /47/ Certain kinds of large millet are sweet and not too unpleasant to eat in this fashion. Horses grow fat because millet is their staple food and they may eat as much as they please. Men also profit greatly, because beer brewed from new millet tastes much better than that made from old millet, and when millet abounds, drink is never wanting. At this time rice is harvested, threshed on the threshing floors, and laid aside carefully for festive occasions.

At the end of October the rains have stopped almost completely. The beans are gathered and laid out in the fields on millet stalks or on séko held up from the ground by forked stakes to keep the termites from eating them, or the beans may be brought home and tossed on the séko which serve as shelters in front of the soukala. Now is the time to harvest the small millet, which is dry. The millet stalks are severed at ground level by the men and laid out with all heads oriented in the same direction to facilitate the work of the women, who cut off the heads and gather them in heaps. When the millet has been cut, the women fill their baskets. The largest containers are used for the occasion, and each woman uses her ingenuity to pile the millet as high as possible over her basket, using the longest ears or bean stems as supports, like the Zouaves who vie for the tallest pack. Should the line of women on their way back to the village meet a man known for his generosity, they sing, cry out, and surround him until he throws them a few handfuls of cowries to buy a jar of beer.

As they near the threshing floor their cries get louder, and each woman comes to the granary and hands her basket to the man who stands there. These granaries are very crudely built and consist basically of sticks driven into the ground in a circle to hold up a séko which is wrapped around them. The floor is made up of another séko, usually resting on the ground but sometimes raised on stones or forked sticks to avoid termites. This is where the millet is placed prior to threshing. The granaries stand around the threshing floor of beaten earth, which is located 100 or 200 meters from the village, sometimes even farther. Thieves are no important threat. They may cut down millet when it stands in the bush, but they rarely steal millet already stored. Only goats, sheep, and guinea hens are to be feared, and they are kept away from the granaries by thorns.

As soon as these heavier tasks are over, everyone digs up peanuts and peas. The whole family gathers under the shade of a tree, and

789 /103/ Happily, it is possible to avoid lightning. To achieve this,
821 it is necessary to find in the bush a white substance rather similar to hyena droppings which the natives call "rain dung," as well as certain tree roots. Part of these roots is left to soak in water for three days, and the rest is burned to ashes. A chicken is sacrificed to the tim. Then the water in which the roots have steeped is used to cook the millet mush, and the sauce is made with baobab leaves. All the soukala dwellers must eat this millet mush, and every one of them is marked on the back and chest with a cross of ashes mixed with karite butter. The horse and donkey, alone among the animals, are similarly marked on the back, chest, and inside the mouth. The huts are marked on the east side, the direction from which the rain comes, and above the entrance. Now there is nothing to be feared. We do feel, however, that lightning-rods are more effective.

759 All these tim, medicinal remedies, amulets, talismans, and
756 superstitious recipes, are prescribed either by true doctors who actually know the properties of herbs and effect real cures or by sorcerers. The doctors are often consulted. Since they specialize in certain diseases, they are consulted for those diseases alone. Those who have been cured by a medicine willingly make it known to friends who are afflicted with the same illness. The doctors are as numerous as the diseases which afflict mankind.

278 Some doctors are not merely healers but also poisoners, and they
674 are greatly feared. The surest way to get rid of an enemy is to consult them, but their fees are high. They have slow poisons which consume the victim gradually and the overwhelming ones which kill in a few hours. They put them in drinks, in millet mush, or more often in kola nuts. There are also people, sorcerers rather than doctors, who claim the power to kill at a distance and who know how to practice sympathetic magic. Their prestige has waned since the French occupation because they have not managed to kill the Whites who settled in the country; but they say that our tim are more powerful than theirs.

754

759 The sorcerers are also numerous. There are those who take up the
756 call of their own accord and those who are born sorcerers. The former
791 are the bagré and seuya; the latter the tibo, bartibo, waongo, and nyonnyonsé. Pardon us these barbaric words, but they are impossible to translate.

791 The bagré is the nice, innocuous kind of sorcerer, who helps the
756 poor for a penny or two. He is consulted about everything. For example, what does the future hold? Will fire destroy my huts or won't

181 The Mossi are a mixture of defects and qualities. As a rule they
577 are not overly scrupulous about stealing and lying, but these deficiencies
674 are not so deeply rooted that they could not be corrected with the development of a more refined conscience. The Mossi are thievish because they often have the opportunity to take what belongs to others, especially cowries which are handled in a very intricate manner. It is so easy, when counting cowries, to slip a few into a pocket without the master's notice! There are some highway robbers, who are greatly feared, and many of them are very skillful. They are, of course, a very small minority.

181 Debts are the most frequent cause of theft. As a rule every Mossi
577 is both a debtor and a creditor, and when he borrows only God knows
426 when he will repay. If someone owes him a debt, he borrows, saying, "So-and-So owes me such-and-such an amount; when he pays me back, I will repay you," and he always finds someone who is willing to lend. Who can deny a friend such a favor? In order to be repaid numerous steps will prove necessary, and the day when the sum is refunded will be a happy one. This shortcoming is so ingrained among them that the wealthiest people are not exempt from it, and although able to return what they have borrowed without difficulty, they do not return it.

181 The Mossi lie easily, but they especially practice the method of
577 mental reservation. When questioned, they excel at posing another question, to find out whether their questioner is really acquainted with the facts. If they can mislead one, they do; on the other hand, if they feel that to confess would be to their advantage, they do so even if their confession implicates their accomplices; but they only do so if they are quite sure of coming through safely.

The Mossi are not false or deceitful, but they often fail to tell the truth for fear of displeasing a more powerful person. They try to guess the reply expected by their questioner, and much caution is needed when a precise piece of information is required. They also deceive by telling only half the truth; when queried, they sometimes reply to a question but suppress a detail which would have modified the answer or opened the way to another question.

They are discreet and know how to keep a secret, especially the king's secrets. When they do not wish to tell anything, they say "I don't know." This is not incriminating, and it cuts short any prying question.

644 who will make him into a sorone if he is a boy, or alone have the right to give her in marriage if she is a girl."

643 Moulins also provides interesting details on the manner in which the Moro Naba spends his days, or rather spent them in the past, for this description refers to the state of affairs prior to the French occupation.

"From Ouarga's reign onward, the Moro Nabas, who had previously resided successively in various parts of the empire, settled at Ouagadougou where they have lived ever since. Custom constrains them never to leave /571/ the capital except in unusually serious circumstances. This is because the land falls into anarchy [674 696] when the sovereign is absent from Ouagadougou. All theft, pillage, and murder committed at that time remain unprosecuted.

644 173 "Every morning at seven, the Moro Naba emerges from his hut. His saddled horse waits before the door. He mounts it and pretends to set out on his way, but after riding around his hut he dismounts and goes back into his hut only to come out again immediately.

"This formality of the protocol has the following origin. A long time ago the favorite wife of the Moro Naba having fled to La, the sovereign wished to go and fetch her himself. He mounted his horse and was about to leave when all the court dignitaries rushed to him, admonishing him not to carry out his project, for his absence from Ouagadougou could only result in anarchy. The monarch gave way, and soon afterwards his wife returned of her own accord. It is in memory of the magnanimity of this sovereign, who sacrificed himself in the interests of his people, that every morning since that time the Moro Naba has pretended to prepare for departure and to then give up his plan.

644 "Following this ceremony, the Moro Naba settles himself in a recess sunk into the wall that surrounds his residence, and then, to the strains of abundant music, the whole court comes to the sovereign and prostrates itself before him, brow in the dust, forearms striking the ground in rhythm with a great clicking of bracelets. Then business is attended to.

"First, the five province chiefs come forward in order of precedence, relate to the Moro Naba those events which have taken place since the preceding day, and receive his instructions for the day. Then they present to him the canton and village chiefs and the common natives who wish for an audience.

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692 or because the litigants had rejected the village chief's verdict). The chief
634 then asked the plaintiff or "the people of X village" to state their case.
695 Someone usually spoke up, and after he had finished, the chief asked the defendant or defendants to do likewise. The litigants were then asked to produce reputable witnesses to support or refute the testimony.

[641] Witnesses had to be male, adult (to have begun to "push a beard"), and
[562] free. Women and bondsmen had no legal personality before a Mossi court.
[567] A slave was represented at court by his master, and a woman by her husband (and, by extension, by his patrilineage). In marital quarrels or property suits, a woman was usually represented by her patrilineage. Only if
[576] she alone could give the required evidence was she allowed in court. When she was asked to testify, she knelt, and spoke in a high, thin, soft voice, thus showing extreme respect to the chief and proper deference to the court. Except for these restrictions, any person could be called in as a witness.
[578] Tempers often ran fairly high among the litigants' relatives and friends while they gave their testimony and argued the case, but their physical separation and their respect for the chief prevented abuse and fighting. Anyone who started a fight in court was liable to a beating by the samandekamba.

●[674] The Mossi believed that most people, given sufficient reason, would commit any crime. Thus they examined the litigants carefully and at great length in an attempt to "get behind" the offense. The district chief interrogated the litigants, but the dignity of the court prevented him from arguing with them. As a matter of fact, most of the cross-examination was done by the litigants themselves. From time to time, the village administrator and the chief's confidants asked brief, direct questions. When a woman was involved, the chief's Pughtiema usually listened to the proceedings from behind a wall and questioned her. When all the evidence was in, the chief either rendered his verdict without delay or retired to the zongo to confer with his confidants and the village administrator. He took the latter course whenever he felt that further discussion was necessary or that false testimony was confusing the issue. Not until he felt that he had the facts well in hand did he return to the court to render his verdict.

The Mossi did not use ordeals in court except in the "chastity trials" conducted by the Pwe Naba. Some litigants called upon the ancestors to kill them if they were not telling the truth; others went to earth shrines and drank an infusion of dust to show that they were not afraid of the spirits who wrought vengeance on the guilty. However, such acts were never carried out in court and thus were of no use to the chief.

The following case, tried in a district court in 1956, illustrates the Mossi

died while he was using it, the owner could not press any claims. However, the borrower was obliged to sell the animal's flesh and give the money to the owner along with the animal's skin as proof of its death. Under no circumstances would a district chief absolve a man from paying the market value of an animal if he failed to return the skin. Such failure would brand him as a thief and involve an additional fine.

The Mossi considered theft a major crime. A thief could be killed with impunity if he was caught in the act and in the presence of several witnesses. If these conditions were not met but the man killed was known to have been a thief, the killer was fined several cows. But if he was known to have been a man of good character, the killer ran the risk of being executed. In this way, the Mossi tried to prevent any abuse of an accepted practice. The theft of grain and other foodstuffs was considered especially reprehensible, because it was held to indicate that the thief was so depraved that he would not even grow his own food. During the rule of Naba Kaglere of Nobere district (1888–1906), a man called Yahiya left his own village of Donse and went to a village called Quitenga to steal sweet potatoes. The people of that village caught him in the act and shot him with a poisoned arrow as he made his escape. Yahiya died without revealing the source of his wound, and his babissi, suspecting foul play, asked Kaglere to investigate. When the Quitenga people learned of the investigation, they went forward voluntarily and reported the circumstances under which they had wounded Yahiya. Kaglere absolved them of all guilt and told the Donse people that Yahiya had deserved to die, not only because he had stolen food (which he might have received if he had asked for it), but because sweet potatoes were the easiest vegetable to cultivate.

A thief who was too clever to be caught in the act but who was apprehended afterwards was treated quite harshly by the Mossi court. Here, the penalty of double indemnity was often applied. A man who was brought to court for stealing a chicken or guinea hen was fined a goat or a sheep. Hence the Mossi proverb "Zou noaga ronda bouga"—"He who steals a chicken repays a goat." The thief who stole one cow had to return several. If a thief could not pay the fine, he was placed in stocks until his relatives paid for him. If they refused to do so, the chief's retainers seized their property, sold it, and made restitution. This often compelled the family of a recidivous thief to make him commit suicide. If the family would not resort to this, the district chief had the man seized and clubbed to death.[7] Sometimes the chief sent recidivists to the Mogho Naba, who sent them to a village called Teemetenga to be made into eunuchs.[8]

The Mossi seem to have made a distinction between theft and pillage—